

## POT 2002: Introduction to Political Theory

Fall 2015  
Section: 1041  
Meeting times: MWF 8 (3:00-3:50)  
Classroom: 2319 Turlington

Instructor: Chris Manick  
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Office: 317 Anderson  
Office hours: MW 1:00-2:00

"Your question is: why am I so interested in politics? But if I were to answer you very simply, I would say this: why shouldn't I be interested? That is to say, what blindness, what deafness, what density of ideology would have to weigh me down to prevent me from being interested in what is probably the most crucial subject to...the society in which we live, the economic relations within which it functions, and the system of power which defines the regular forms and the regular permissions and prohibitions of our conduct? The essence of our life consists, after all, of the political functioning of the society in which we find ourselves."

- Michel Foucault

"I can only answer the question, 'What am I do to?' If I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"

- Alasdair MacIntyre

"The political scientist who ignores the biases in everyday classifications ends up practicing politics surreptitiously and unconsciously—and therefore confusedly—rather than analyzing it."

- Allan Janik

### Course description:

This class is designed to familiarize students with a number of thinkers generally recognized as fundamental for the development of political modernity. It resembles a sort of "greatest hits" album, and a short one at that. But while the course is in no way meant to be exhaustive in its scope, the authors we read have all been central to the articulation of a number of traditions that continue to exert a profound impact on contemporary Western political theory and practice. In this vein, ideologies to be discussed include (but will not be limited to): authoritarianism, republicanism, liberalism, democracy, socialism, and Marxism. Topically, we will discuss political obligation versus political obedience, political resistance and revolution, the "social contract," natural rights, sovereignty, liberty, private property, history, power, and human nature. We will also address such problems as the relationships between ethics and politics, religion and politics, philosophy and politics, commercial and political life, and the consequences of economic inequality.

In addition to introducing students to canonical texts in political theory, a larger goal of this course will be looking at why we engage with them. These ideologies, topics, and relationships constitute, in part, the political, cultural, economic, and social situations that we exist within right now. Studying them helps us understand that we are already engaged in co-creating our world, whether or not we realize it. Thus, our broader goal in this course is to come to grips, at least in some small measure, with how we in the modern West have become what we are, and to think critically about the ways in which knowledge derived from reflection upon old texts might inform the political life we create for ourselves in the present. This requires actively and aggressively reading texts in order to gain a critical awareness of the themes, arguments, and insights they contain. Having "critical awareness" means being able to speak intelligently about an argument (giving more than just an intuitive reaction) and express its significance to others.

Note: I retain the right to alter course requirements at my discretion. This includes (but is not limited to) the required texts, the schedule and arrangement of readings, number and weight of assignments, and expectations.

### Required texts:

Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, (ed. Francis Cornford). Oxford University Press.

ISBN: 0195003640

*The Portable Machiavelli*, (eds. Peter Bondanella & Mark Musa). Penguin Publishers.

ISBN: 0140150927

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, (ed. Peter Laslett). Cambridge Univ. Press.

ISBN: 0521357306

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, (ed. Robert C. Tucker). Norton Publishers.

ISBN: 039309040X

*The Portable Nietzsche*, (ed. Walter Kaufmann). Penguin Books.

ISBN: 0140150625

Note: Please try to obtain these versions, especially where passages are assigned from the editors' introductions. I have done my best to assign versions that are easy to find, economically-priced, and yet responsibly edited. Websites like amazon.com or half.com should have plenty of inexpensive copies. That said, the world won't end if you show up with a different translation or copy. But you are responsible for reading all assigned sections, including introductory materials.

### Grading:

Five components will comprise your final grade (due dates are located in the schedule below):

1. Essay 1 (25%)
2. Essay 2 (25%)
3. Essay 3 (25%)
4. Discussion questions (10%)
5. Attendance and participation (15%)

*Essays:* The highest grade a late paper can receive in the absence of a legitimate excuse is a "C+." Please be aware: a "C+" is not the lowest grade a late paper can receive; it is the highest (i.e. it is the ceiling, not the floor).

*Quizzes:* These will be of the "pop" (i.e. unannounced) variety. The number and occasion of quizzes will be determined by the class' willingness to participate in discussion and will comprise part of your participation grade.

*Participation:* You are required to participate in two ways: (i) For each of the five (5) major thinkers we read, you will be responsible for submitting at least one discussion question and response (due dates for questions are located in the schedule below); (ii) Since a crucial component of "doing" philosophy is deliberating (giving and receiving careful consideration to reasonable arguments) over the meaning and value of texts, you will be held accountable for attending and partaking in all classroom discussions. In fact, discussion accounts for a large portion of our in-class activities. Consequently, you cannot earn an "A" without participating in class.

### Grading Scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	59-0

### **Accommodations:**

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please come see me as soon as possible regarding this matter.

### **Academic Integrity:**

All students are required to abide by the University of Florida's Academic Honesty Guidelines. Among other things, this means cheating on essays and exams is totally unacceptable, as is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of portraying as your own the words or ideas of other people. The following pledge is hereby implied for all work submitted in this class: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." If you are unsure what comprises plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, you should consult with me (sooner rather than later), and/or visit the Dean of Students' Student Conduct website: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

### **Readings:**

There's no getting around it: this course is a motorcycle ride through the Louvre. In one semester we will cover some of the most important arguments made in Western political philosophy. This course should be considered a challenge, but one that you are fully capable of meeting if you give a committed effort. It is assumed that you are here because you want to understand these arguments. That said, I do not apologize for reading loads. They reflect the best balance I can find between the demands of time and the demands of content. In other words, we are going to read the essential stuff and get to the point, but that still means we have to work to get there. My goal is to get you reading and get you thinking. My expectations are simple: (1) study the texts actively, critically, and aggressively; (2) come to class prepared and willing to participate in meaningful discussion. This means having done the readings *in advance* of the class for which they have been assigned. It is essential that you keep up with the readings. Falling behind will make it difficult for you to participate in class discussions, follow the lectures, write papers, and develop intellectually.

### **Summary of due dates:**

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| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>August 28</b>    | Citizen Essay                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>September 11</b> | Plato Discussion Question/Response       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>September 23</b> | Machiavelli Discussion Question/Response |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>October 09</b>   | First Essay                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>October 14</b>   | Locke Discussion Question/Response       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>October 28</b>   | Marx Discussion Question/Response        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>November 16</b>  | Second Essay                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>November 20</b>  | Postmodern Discussion Question/Response  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>December 11</b>  | Third Essay                              |

## Schedule of readings:

### Introduction: How and why one “does” political theory

**August 24 (M)** Introduction, course logistics, syllabus perusal (no readings)

**August 26 (W)** You are already co-creating the world: Answering the “Why should I care?” question (Reading: Westheimer & Kahne - “Educating the ‘Good’ Citizen”)

**CITIZEN ESSAY HANDED OUT: WHAT KIND OF CITIZEN ARE YOU AND WHY?**

**August 28 (F)** Thiele - “Theory and Vision”

**CITIZEN ESSAY DUE**

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### Plato, justice, and the politics of the soul

**August 31 (M)** *The Republic*, pp 1-40 (ch I-IV)

**September 02 (W)** *The Republic*, pp 41-66 (ch V-VIII)

**September 04 (F)** *The Republic*, 102-118, 119-144 (ch X-XI, XII-XIV)

**September 07 (M)** NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

**September 09 (W)** *The Republic*, pp, 175-211 (ch XVIII-XXII)

**September 11 (F)** *The Republic*, pp 211-235, 264-266, 273-274, 279-280, 287-288, 301-320 (ch XXIX-XXXIV, XVIII-XXV)

**PLATO DISCUSSION QUESTION/RESPONSE DUE**

**September 14 (M)** Discussion (no readings)

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### Machiavelli, republicanism, and the science of politics

**September 16 (W)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 17-26 (Introduction), pp 77-95 (*The Prince*)

**September 18 (F)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 96-166 (*The Prince*)

**September 21 (M)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 168-228, 252-253, 281-287 (*The Discourses*)

**September 23 (W)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 287-301, 314-316, 319-325, 326-338, 342-345, 351-356, 386-388, 400-402, 416-418 (*The Discourses*)

**MACHIAVELLI DISCUSSION QUESTION/RESPONSE DUE**

**FIRST ESSAY TOPIC HANDED OUT**

**September 25 (F)** Discussion and essay review (no readings)

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### Modernity’s “Noble Lie”: John Locke, natural law, and the social contract

**September 28 (M)** Constant - “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”

**September 30 - October 02** NO CLASS

**October 05 (M)** *Two Treatises of Government*, 267-302

**October 07 (W)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 93-110 (from Laslett Introduction)

**October 09 (F)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 303-330

**FIRST ESSAY DUE**

**October 12 (M)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 330-374

**October 14 (W)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 374-405

**LOCKE DISCUSSION QUESTION/RESPONSE DUE**

**October 16 (F)** Discussion (no readings)

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**The Marxist critique of liberalism**

**October 19 (M)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 3-6, 26-52, 53-65, 299-302

**October 21 (W)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 70-105

**October 23 (F)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 143-145, 148-163

**October 26 (M)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 203-217, 305-306, 336-339

**October 28 (W)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 469-491

**MARX DISCUSSION QUESTION/RESPONSE DUE**

**SECOND ESSAY HANDED OUT**

**October 30 (F)** Discussion and essay review (no readings)

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**Toward a post-modern politics**

**November 02 (M)** *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 95-6, 101-2, 447-450, 568-576, 581-582, 592-594, 618-620, 628-631, 632-634

**November 04 (W)** *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 463-501

**November 06-11** NO CLASS (HOMECOMING, VETERAN'S DAY)

**November 13 (F)** *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp 501-505, 513-563

**November 16 (M)** Foucault - "Governmentality"

**SECOND ESSAY DUE**

**November 18 (W)** Foucault - "Subject and Power"

**November 20 (F)** Thiele - "The Agony of Politics"

**POSTMODERN DISCUSSION QUESTION/RESPONSE DUE**

**FINAL ESSAY HANDED OUT**

**November 23 (M)** Discussion (no readings)

**November 25-27** NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

**November 30 (M)** David Foster Wallace - Kenyon College Commencement Speech

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**Semester review**

**December 02 (W)** Student-led essay review

**December 04 (F)** NO CLASS

**December 11 (W)** Final Essay Due